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Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development

Macroeconomic policy questions

Sustainable development and international economic cooperation

Advancement of women

Letter dated 30 September 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the message of 30 September 1998 from the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. N. A. Nazarbaev, to the people of Kazakhstan, entitled "Democratization of society and economic and political reform in the new century".

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 33, 37, 91, 93 and 103.

(*Signed*) Akmaral Kh. **Arystanbekova**
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Annex

Message of 31 September 1998 from the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. N. A. Nazarbaev, to the people of Kazakhstan, entitled "Democratization of society and economic and political reform in the new century"

We must acknowledge with pride the enormous strides that have been taken in seven short years to create a free and independent Kazakhstan. From the very first days, our main priority has been to strengthen our national security. In the post-cold-war era, power is not defined by the size of a country's army, but rather by the productivity and competitiveness of its economy, and also by the creativity and success of its diplomacy. Judged by these two criteria, Kazakhstan has indeed become a powerful State.

We have created a buffer of peace on all our borders, what might be termed a "safety-belt". Not one country in the world – not one – is hostile to us. Our multilateral diplomacy and foreign policy have successfully consolidated both our sovereignty and our territorial integrity, and have built up close relations with the world community. What has been done this year and what will have to be done next year in the field of foreign policy is set out in the special report which you have before you.

We know the goal we are aiming for. Last year, we embodied in the comprehensive programme "Kazakhstan-2030" our vision of modern Kazakhstan, our idea of the country we wish to leave to our children and our children's children. This programme sets forth in detail the road to the future "prosperity, security and ever-growing welfare" of the entire Kazakh people. It is the road we are following, today and every day. You may read in a second special report which is before you about the work that has been done for the implementation of the Strategy. We must remember that temporary delays await us on this road, that we shall at times have to make detours, overcome crises in individual sectors of the economy that arise from time to time and deal with other nation-wide emergency situations. But we shall not turn aside from our road, we shall travel it milestone by milestone and ultimately we shall create the society about which we dream.

In those countries where democracy was suppressed for almost 50 years after the Second World War, the pre-existing democratic political institutions could be rapidly rebuilt. But in Kazakhstan, where there were no democratic institutions in the modern sense, the process began from scratch. Accordingly, we progressed step by step, fostering democratic culture among the population. That is why our road is much longer and more difficult. On the other hand, our institutions and infrastructure, being new, are not tied to the mistakes and policies of the past. In other words, we have the advantage of a fresh start.

Now, we need to reaffirm our faithfulness to the goal that has been outlined. We need to demonstrate that we have the strength, the vision and the courage to stay the course and build our new Kazakhstan on the solid foundation of political justice and economic freedom.

As the saying goes, the wise man sees far. My fellow citizens, the new Kazakhstan needs precisely that far-sighted wisdom. The "2030 Strategy" takes precisely that long view.

The choice before us is clear: reform or regress, strive for the future or stagnate, democratize or decay. Either we continue to build a Kazakhstan for the new age, or we slide into chaos.

I propose to you today to choose a Kazakhstan for the twenty-first century based on sound and universally held values.

I propose to you today to choose a Kazakhstan based on a new economy.

I propose to you today to choose a Kazakhstan built upon democratic principles.

I propose to you today to choose new structures and new procedures based on effectiveness and fairness of the State administration.

I propose to continue building a strong and secure Kazakhstan which will play a prominent role in the world.

This is the Kazakhstan that I propose for the sake of our children.

A Kazakhstan where there will be no room for religious extremism.

A Kazakhstan where there will be no room for national extremism.

And, lastly, a Kazakhstan in which political extremism will be rejected openly and forever.

The forces of authority and our laws will vigorously combat any manifestation of extremism. Only in this way can we preserve and develop our democratic institutions.

The time has come to look ahead. The time has come for action. The time has come to demonstrate our will. The time has come for change.

And now let me be specific.

Where the economy of Kazakhstan is concerned, we face a threefold challenge:

- To guide the economy safely through a period of severe financial upheavals in the region;
- To place the economy on a firm path of recovery and growth;
- And, lastly, to continue the promising advance towards an independent, open and free market economy and ensure that the benefits of a sound economy are directly reflected in the quality of life of our people.

Our main task today is to build a broad and strong system to protect our country's economic system and our people's economic health.

With this programme, Kazakhstan will demonstrate to our own business community, to our trading partners and to the world's financial institutions and analysts that we have the will and the ability to take active and decisive steps in a time of economic crisis. With economic storms raging all around us, we shall set an example of how a far-sighted and strong Government should act.

However, protecting our economy and reducing the damage caused by outside factors to a minimum is one thing, and ensuring economic growth is another. We have successfully conducted a set of stringent measures in the credit and monetary and budget and tax spheres which has helped contain inflation and stabilize the economy. At the same time, we are now suffering severe consequences from the economic slump in the world, which has been intensified by the fall in world prices for our export products and by serious arrears in the payment of wages.

We need to take measures which will stimulate the development of our market economy which has been emerging over the past seven years by removing the structural barriers that restrict the recovery of the existing enterprises and the creation of new ones

from small and medium businesses. These measures are vitally necessary for our economy in order that it may resume growth and continue to grow.

When I travel to various parts of our great and beautiful land, I am struck by the forces and wealth it contains, by the abundance of human talent – the guarantee of the future greatness of the country – and I note that in every town and in every village too many people are now suffering from material want, that there is a good deal of bitterness and resentment. They cannot wait for these well-thought-out long-term plans to begin to bear fruit. We shall do everything necessary to ensure that the inhabitants of our country feel the support of the Government during these difficult times. We do not propose to do for the people what they are best able to do for themselves. But the Government had a sacred obligation to help the people during times of hardship.

To achieve these objectives, I am announcing the following programme for reform of the Government:

First, we shall mount a vigorous campaign against corruption at all levels. Nothing so hampers entrepreneurship, discourages investment and creates distrust among citizens as the conviction that corruption permeates the decision-making of the authorities.

The Parliament recently passed comprehensive anti-corruption legislation, for which I am deeply grateful to the members of both houses. We now need to take these important words written on paper and make them part of the everyday practice of all government bodies and departments in every town and every village. I pledge once again that the law you have enacted will be fully and vigorously enforced.

I shall do everything to ensure the prompt establishment of a new special anticorruption agency, with extremely broad powers established by law, which will have to be headed by a well-known and trusted figure capable of leading a State-wide campaign to eradicate corruption. Tough enforcement of the law will be required. We shall provide it.

Second, we shall strengthen the tax collection system. The State has to pay the people in accordance with its obligations, but the people too have to pay the State and their local authorities what is provided for by law. Our weak tax system undermines the financial foundations of the State, creates unhealthy market phenomena, deters foreign investors and undermines citizens' confidence in the country's leadership. There are many examples of a poorly established tax system leading in the final analysis to the collapse of a country's economy. We should not repeat these errors. Our task is to create a rational, fair and consistent tax system.

Such things cannot be done overnight. It may take years. But we must act now to initiate the process and make it irreversible. Within the next few days a State Revenue Agency will be established, with the broad powers and resources to enable it to take the most vigorous action nationwide to improve the tax collection system. All of its activities will have our full and total support.

We must make available to those in charge of this work the reliable tools, the power, the resources and the support they need to get the job done successfully – we shall see it as sending generals into battle against our country's enemies. We realize that there will be resistance. Criminals will attack and slander those who fight against them. We are ready for this. And we want everyone to understand clearly once and for all that the country regards those who have engaged in corruption or systematic non-payment of their legal tax obligations as its enemies and will mercilessly expose and prosecute them and, if they are found guilty, punish them with the full force of the law. Actions of this kind must be branded as absolutely unacceptable, and no one will be allowed to circumvent this law. Let me make

it absolutely clear: neither political power nor wealth nor personal connections will be able to set aside the just punishment provided for by the law in cases of bribery and tax evasion.

Third, we shall streamline the organization of the Government in order to make it clearer who is responsible for what and whom to ask about what. This will ensure more effective attainment of the goals we have set ourselves and better coordinated implementation of the programmes we have adopted.

The most educated and honest citizens who are true patriots of their country will be selected for Government service.

This task will be assigned to the Agency for Government Service Affairs which I have recently established by Decree. The Agency will also be responsible for establishing a system to ensure fair promotion of government employees on the basis of objective criteria.

On this historic day, I propose to you a programme of democratization and political reforms which will serve as a new starting point in our national history.

The core of political reform in Kazakhstan will consist of seven fundamental elements of democratization and political liberalization.

In the first place, the electoral process must be honest, representative and conducive to the active participation of candidates and voters.

Free and fair elections are the cornerstone of any democracy. This is precisely the role they must play in our democracy as well. Let me note in passing that our folk wisdom encapsulates this in an apt aphorism: "The people speaks rarely, but when it speaks it is not wrong". Elections are precisely the time when the people makes its views known. Our aim must be clear: to make the upcoming national elections an example of free and fair elections.

Democracy is always a work in progress. Even the great western democracies have not fully involved their minorities in the political process. We, too, have not been able to do this to the full. But we can state with pride that under extremely difficult conditions we have achieved a stability among ethnic and religious groups that has not been achieved by many countries in the world over the past decade.

To attain these goals, we need to simplify our election legislation; it will then be easier for people to engage in political rivalry, and the deputies' seats will be filled by those, and only those, candidates who are indeed supported by the majority of voters. Accordingly, I propose that the filing fees for candidates for Parliament should be reduced, or completely eliminated, so that every citizen of Kazakhstan of the age required by law will be able to compete freely for the right to become a deputy, regardless of wealth or social status.

And in order for the elections in our country to be truly free and fair, we must create conditions for and wholeheartedly welcome participation in monitoring the elections by observers from Kazakhstan and the international community. I therefore, as President of the country, state clearly and firmly that any elections in our State will be honest and open.

Lastly, we need to develop a large-scale step-by-step programme for the election of leaders at all levels. There is no place here for the revolutionary impatience which had led some countries into unmanageability and chaos; nor, however, can this problem be passed over in silence. We need to embark in the very near future on drawing up such a programme, clearly defining its stages and levels. In addition, it must not be forgotten that the models of local self-government are far from being perfect. We shall need to undertake reforms in this sphere as well.

The second important component of the set of measures for the political democratization of the life of society is strengthening of the role of the parties in our political

system. Political parties are the basic "building material" with which the edifice of democracy is constructed, and we need to do everything possible, in the legal sphere and in other ways, to consolidate their place in society in order that they may grow and become stronger.

Our goal must be to ensure comprehensive participation by Kazakhstan's political parties in the 1999 elections to the Majlis. This will enable voters to define their political sympathies more accurately, afford citizens an opportunity of participating fully in the political process, bring representatives of the political parties into the new composition of the Majlis and educate parliamentary leaders. In order that the broadest possible spectrum of view should be represented in our Parliament, I propose adding to the Majlis 10 additional seats to be filled by means of a proportional representation system from the party list. It has taken us a long time to make this decision, and we believe that it will be a powerful breakthrough towards democracy and that the political forces in the country will utilize this initiative for the good of the people and will act responsibly in the strengthening of our statehood.

I call upon all the parties, regardless of their political orientation, to respect and preserve political and inter-ethnic stability in our country. The future of our statehood and the future of democracy itself depend on this.

Thirdly, we must also seek to strengthen and ensure the dependence of our Senate and Majlis, and the stability and continuity of power in Kazakhstan. To this end, I propose that if the President is released from his duties or dismissed from office, or if he dies before the end of his term, the duties of the President should for the remainder of the term be assumed by the Chairman of the Senate. If the Chairman of the Senate is unable to assume the duties of the President, they will be assumed by the Chairman of the Majlis. If the Chairman of the Majlis is unable to assume the duties of the President, they will be assumed by the Prime Minister. The candidatures of individual members of the Government and of ambassadors should be agreed upon in the committees of the Senate and the Majlis. Over the first seven years of our country's existence, we have built up an important tradition of parliamentary activity in the administration of the State. I am proud to stand before you today as a living witness to the important role played by Parliament in Kazakhstan. At the same time, I am convinced that in the years to come, Parliament will further strengthen its role as a guarantee that the work of the Government meets the needs of the population.

By allowing for proportional representation of political parties, we shall make the composition of the Majlis a better and a fairer reflection of the political views that enjoy wide support in Kazakhstan. I also propose to ensure broader participation of ethnic and religious minorities in Parliament; to this end some of the senators appointed to Parliament by the President must be selected from among the candidates recommended by the Assembly of the peoples of Kazakhstan. Parliament, by 80 per cent of the votes in each of the houses, can introduce amendments to the Constitution, and these must be approved by the people in a referendum by majority vote, on condition that there is at least a 50 per cent voter turnout.

I further propose that the work of parliamentary sessions should receive broad and regular coverage on television. This will give Parliament added political weight and make it a more noticeable part of the life of society. To this end, a set time will need to be allocated for broadcasting parliamentary sessions over the nationwide channels.

In order to strengthen the accountability of the country's leadership and the role of Parliament as an independent and totally specific branch of State power, the Prime Minister

and the members of his cabinet should be responsible to Parliament and should address the deputies and the parliamentary committees on a regular basis.

A key element of democratization is strengthening the role of non-governmental organizations in building civil society. A democratic structure, my dear fellow-countrymen, is not of itself a guarantee that society will be democratic. Democracy is based on a complex mechanism of private voluntary institutions through which the citizens participate in political life, volunteer their services for the benefit of others and of their country, express their dissent and defend their interest.

In order to afford genuine freedom for the activity of citizens' associations, the Ministry of Justice needs to simplify the procedure for registration and supervision of domestic and foreign non-governmental organizations wishing to operate in the territory of Kazakhstan and encourage the formation and active work of such organizations.

Fifthly, an independent judiciary is a cornerstone of democratic society. We need to ensure a highly professional level of work and autonomy of the judicial system, which must decide all issues dispassionately and be free from corruption. There is a lot that we need to do to improve the training of judges. We must vigorously enforce the recently enacted anti-corruption law. The Supreme Judicial Council should not be headed by the President.

Sixthly, we have an obligation to build on what we have already achieved with respect to a free, uncensored and independent press. The Government must regard free access to information by journalists not as a favour granted by it, but as its duty to public opinion. We must work to remove the obstacles that still stand in the way of a free press in our country. Therefore, we must take the road of privatizing a number of State-owned mass media. We shall start a process of privatizing many State publishing houses. The existence of independent media and an increase in their numbers at any cost means increased openness in society.

Seventh, and finally, how civilized a society is can be measured by its attitude to women. Quite honestly, the attitude to the fair sex provides much food for thought. A great deal needs to be changed. I understand the seriousness of the problem, and I intend to give the Council on Problems of the Family, Women and Population Policy a much more prominent role or to form on its basis a special commission on women's problems. The commission must become a principal adviser to both the President and the Government on the solution of acute problems in this area. We cannot solve everything at once, but a number of specific issues can be addressed as early as next year.

First, there is a need to increase the representation of women in all organs of authority. This is, if you like, an issue of social equality. Secondly, domestic violence against women must be vigorously combated. Thirdly, the Government, recognizing how inseparable the link is between political independence and economic independence, must encourage the establishment of a bank to grant loans to women wishing to open businesses.

Kazakhs!

It was from our sacred soil that man first went into space, marking the beginning of a new era in technology.

In just 457 days, the world will be entering a new decade, a new century, a new millennium.

On that day, not too far away, from Almaty to Astana, from Qastanay to Taraz, from the Caspian to Balqash, and from the banks of the Irtysh to the banks of the Ural, the people of Kazakhstan will enter upon their future.

And what Kazakhstan and its place in the world will be depends only on us. The danger is great, but the possibilities are still greater. As the Kazakh proverb says, "An affair cannot be completed without difficulties, without striving the goal cannot be reached".

History will be our judge. The eyes of our children and grandchildren are upon us.

For their sake, and for our own, we have no right to lose this battle for the future.